

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5852

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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USCINCEUR

S E C R E T ANKARA 6880

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IT, TU, US

SUBJ: PROPOSED TRANSFER OF F-104S TO TURKEY

REF: A. STATE 183768; B. ROME 11559; C. ATHENS 6116

1. AS WE SEE IT, QUESTION OF PURCHASE BY TURKEY OF F-104
AIRCRAFT PRODUCED IN ITALY INVOLVES TWO SEPARATE AND DISTINCT
ISSUES:

(A) USG POLICY DECISION AS TO WHETHER AIRCRAFT SHOULD
BE SUPPLIED TO TURKEY, AND

(B) PURELY TECHNICAL PROBLEM OF ARRANGING DELIVERY OF
AIRCRAFT FROM ITALY TO TURKEY, GIVEN PRESENT LIMITATIONS ON
USE OF GREEK AIR SPACE.

2. POLICY DECISION INVOLVES, WE BELIEVE, A NUMBER OF FACTORS,
PRINCIPAL AMONG WHICHIS, OF COURSE, CYPRUS DISPUTE. A
TRANSACTION OF THIS KIND OBVIOUSLY HAS TO BE WEIGHED IN LIGHT
OF THAT SITUATION AS IT UNFOLDS. OUR OBSERVATIONS ON OTHER FACTORS

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FOLLOW:

(A) FORCE STRUCTURE. IF, AS TURKS HAVE TOLD LOCKHEED, F-104S WILL REPLACE F-102 IN AIR DEFENSE ROLE, PURCHASE IS A SOUND AND LOGICAL STEP IN THE MODERNIZATION OF TURKEY'S AIR DEFENSES. TURKS MAY PLAN IN INTERIM PERIOD TO USE F-104S IN FIGHTER BOMBER ROLE. (THEIR INTEREST IN ACQUIRING THE M-61 CANNON FOR F-104S IN LIEU OF AVIONICS PACKAGE FOR THE AIM-7 MISSILE SO INDICATES.) IF F-102'S OR OTHER OLDER AIRCRAFT ARE IN THIS EVENTUALITY NOT RETIRED, ONE SQUADRON OF F-104S AIRCRAFT WOULD STILL LEAVE FORCE STRUCTURE WITHIN JCS APPROVED FORCE GOALS (AND WELL BELOW NATO FORCE GOALS).

(B) U.S. COMMERCIAL INTEREST. DOLLAR RETURN FROM THIS SALE AND FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT WILL, OF COURSE, BE WELL BELOW DIRECT U.S. PURCHASE (DEPARTMENT IS IN BETTER POSITION TO WEIGH THIS FACTOR), BUT WE HAVE NO ASSURANCES THAT TURKS WILL TURN TO U.S. AIRCRAFT SHOULD THIS TRANSFER NOT BE APPROVED. F-104S SALE MIGHT GIVE LOCKHEED FACILITY IN ITALY SOME ADVANTAGE IN COMPETITION FOR AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION FACILITY IN TURKEY (IN WHICH U.S. FIRMS INTERESTED), ALTHOUGH TURKS HAVE NOT SO INDICATED.

(C) FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT. THERE IS QUESTION OF WHETHER F-104S WOULD BE FOUND ELIGIBLE FOR FMS AND GRANT MAP SUPPORT, BUT WE ASSUME F-104G HAS SET FAVORABLE PRECEDENT IN THIS REGARD.

(D) NATO INTERESTS. ITALIAN-TURKISH COOPERATION ON THIS PROJECT MIGHT BE POSITIVE FACTOR IN RESTORING STRENGTH OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK.

(E) POLITICAL IMPACT. IF U.S. APPROVAL OF TRANSFER FOLLOWS GOI APPROVAL OF SALE, GREEK DISPLEASURE WOULD BE SPREAD OVER BOTH GOVERNMENTS. U.S. DISAPPROVAL FOLLOWING GOI APPROVAL, ON OTHER HAND, WOULD FOCUS TURK DISPLEASURE SQUARELY ON US.

3. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, POSITIVE FACTORS OUTLINED ABOVE SEEM TO OUTWEIGH NEGATIVE. WE WOULD THEREFORE
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RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THIS TRANSFER PROVIDED ITALIANS APPROVED SALE.

4. IN ANY EVENT, DELIVERY PROBLEM SHOULD NOT, IN OUR OPINION, DELAY U.S. POLICY DECISION ON TRANSFER OF THESE AIRCRAFT. IF AND WHEN U.S. APPROVES TRANSFER AND SUPPLIER GOVERNMENTS APPROVE SALE, QUESTION OF EFFECTING MECHANICS OF DELIVERY CAN THEN BE HANDLED BY TURKS AND THEIR

ITALIAN AND POSSIBLY GERMAN-BASED SUPPLIERS. WE THINK
BOTH GOI AND FRG ARE FULLY AWARE OF DELICACY OF QUESTION
OF USING GREEK AIR SPACE OF DELIVERY OF THESE AIRCRAFT TO
TURKEY AND CAN BE RELIED UPON, IF NECESSARY, TO MAKE
DELIVERY BY ALTERNATIVE MEANS SATISFACTORY TO TURKEY.
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